China – Europa Forum

Preparatory meeting for the workshop:
"Sustainable cities and communities"

Summary

- **Introduction to the Forum China – Europa initiative –** *E. Jastrabsky*

- **1ˢᵗ session: The concept of "sustainable city"**

"Sustainable cities": dream or reality? – *D. Robinson* (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne – EPFL)

We need to take into account the global and historical context of European cities. In general we can observe that an improvement of the human know-how has major consequences in terms of population growth because there is the technology to feed more people. This can be summarized by the following formula, describing the impact of human activity on the environment:

$$I = P*A*T$$

⇨ Human Impact (**I**) on the environment equals the product of population (**P**), affluence (**A**: consumption per capita) and technology (**T**: environmental impact per unit of consumption).

In this case, China has a major potential environmental impact and technology could be one of the major elements to decrease this impact.

Recent history also showed us that energy and economic crises may be critical factors to promote investments in more environmental technologies (after the 1973 oil crisis in the USA for instance).

Another important challenge for cities in the future is the growth of urban population. Indeed, it is foreseen that 70% - 80% of the world population will live in urban areas by 2050. This urban phenomenon will have several dramatic consequences, e.g. un planned urban sprawl.

Thus, sustainable cities may appear like a dream but there are still some reasons to be optimistic. We should focus on polycentric cities (vs monocentric cities characterized by a low density of population) and on a mix of facilities and scales. To achieve those sustainability goals, we could take inspiration from nature.

There are also some examples and good practices which could be transferable, e.g.:
- the Kalundborg's Symbiosis Project (a resource-sharing system)
- eco-communities in Malmö and Stockholm, Sweden (focus on energy supply and transport system, but problems concerning local energy demand and social diversity)
⇨ Those examples demonstrate that all needs can be locally satisfied

Thus, sustainability should now be considered as the rule, not the exception anymore. There is no unique model of the European sustainable city but several interesting elements to be studied, e.g.: London (with an efficient local transport system and strong local communities). It is also necessary to develop more socially inclusive models of sustainable cities and computer models, e.g.: Citysim (http://www.ibpsa.org/proceedings/BS2009/BS09_1083_1090.pdf)

Discussion
- Density: there is no perfect level of density to make a city more sustainable
- Speed: Chinese cities are built very fast and they are not well-planned.
- Scales: the total stock of homes in France is composed of 24 million homes whereas China plan to build 12 million homes in the years to come. In addition, there is more inner migrants in China than migrants crossing borders in the rest of the world today.
- "Eco-quartiers": models but they are not accessible to low-income people. Sometimes, the creation of a sustainable district destroys the existing social networks and excludes the local inhabitants. Is it still sustainability? We need to pay more attention to the social pillar of sustainable development.

"Sustainable cities and the Eco-Towns Programme" - *D. Hackforth* (Representative of the Planning Officers Society)

The Eco-towns programme is an initiative launched by the British government five or six years ago to promote the construction of sustainable new settlements (http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/ecotowns/).

They are managed by consortia of land-owners associations and private companies.

1st step: 4 proposed sites identified in development plans

2nd step: new sites identified
    ⇨ In some cases, this programme is the opportunity to put a label on existing development cities

However, this programme will allow the construction of a very modest number of homes compared to the needs. Indeed, by 2031, there will be a need of 3 million more homes in the UK (and 1 million in South East England which is a growth area).
Moreover, most of the homes needed by 2031 already exist actually => Need to focus also on sustainable renovation and urban regeneration.
This programme is thus just scratching the surface of the problem, it is a good idea but this is not enough, in addition to future foreseeable public spending problems, which could be a threat for this initiative.

Sustainable governance for sustainable cities? – *C. Jacquier* (Expert on urban governance – CNRS)

We need to change our representations: the local community level is now considered as the strategic scale to make the best with cities, to recycle existing cities.
We need also to cross spatial and temporal boundaries, which means considering multilevel and transversal levels of governance. Moreover, we need to foster dialogue within the different components of bureaucracy ⇔ mix of competences.
We need to put forward the interactions between the contradictory dimensions of sustainable development, which means fostering political cooperation and fighting against the essence of human nature.

In the EU, we can observe a "urban homogeneity" ⇔ the "treillis model". In China, the situation is very different: most of the biggest cities ate built along the Eastern cost and there are lots of megalopolises.

We also need to take into account the "GDP[1] bias" in cities. Indeed, cities are major places to product economic growth and know-how but they are also producing inequalities, unemployment and poverty. They are often very rich in terms of GDP but this is not the case anymore in terms of disposable income per capita (DI), e.g.:
London: GDP = 2,5 vs DI = 1,2
Brussels: GDP = 2 vs DI < 1
The current crisis will deepen those inequalities.
As a result, we need to keep in mind that development is not only about GDP

Other challenges:
- One of the main issues at stake for most countries today is water management.
- By 2050, we must divide by 4 the human energy consumption and pollution.
- Housing needs: at the current improving trend of the building stocks: we will need 125 – 200 years to bridge the gap in terms of supply and demand.
- In the EU, 3 major elements are lacking: Investments, Skills and Regulation

    ⇨ We have to leave the path dependency

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[1] GDP = Gross Domestic Product

⇨ The solutions will be found at the local level through democracy and strong local governance
⇨ One major problem: money and lack of means and resources, at all level

• **2nd session: Towards European sustainable cities?**

J. Olbrycht (Member of the European Parliament, President of the EP URBAN Intergroup) - http://www.vleva.eu/system/files/Urban_Intergroup.pdf

At the UN Urban Forum organised in Rio de Janeiro: 15 000 participants but only 60 Europeans, and mostly Africans.

To build sustainable cities: everything is important but we need to pay a particular attention to social issues and especially urban inequalities and poverty. And we must take into account the cost of sustainability for local people. There is also the problem of the local participation: how to make people participate in the future decisions for their cities?

Is urban sustainability a European problem or a local problem? The answers are different depending on the issue and on the country. In the case of transport for instance, Germany considered it as local (subsidiarity principle). However, European cities face similar problems (urban sprawl, management of difficult areas…)
⇨ Yes, for the European Parliament URBAN Intergroup, sustainability is a European problem.
⇨ The problem of urban sustainability should be defined as European and the solutions should be tools and initiatives concerning concrete policies (environment, transport), which would be more efficient than charters and guidelines. European programmes are also good tools to implement urban sustainability but they need to be completed by tightening conditionality to receive European money
⇨ To improve conditionality, we need a coherent European urban policy which would be a platform to avoid fragmentation of policies in Europe.

What are the tools to implement urban sustainability? Charters, conferences, exchange of good practices (if it supported by effective analysis). But also concrete examples: Eco-towns, implementation of sustainable communities, initiative about urban mobility impulsed by DG Move… The major limits: competences and the lack of resources.

J. L. Dubrigny (Director of the URBACT programme)

URBACT: 300 partners (250 cities and local authorities) - http://urbact.eu/fr/header-main/urbact-en-bref/carte-didentite/urbact-en-mots/

The three pillars of sustainability are all equally important but the social one is often forgotten and urban exclusion keeps being a major problem in Europe. Indeed, we are discussing a lot about environmental issues, which is relevant for pilot projects but not very sustainable in the long term. Necessity of a social mix.

The key question is: Is sustainable development a question of management? A very important concept to implement sustainable cities is multi-level governance, in other words better management methods in addition to clear political choices.

But, there is no shared vision concerning this "better management" criterion among the member States. There is a big gap between political declarations and the reality perceived by the European leaders.

A new document will be presented in Toledo during a ministerial meeting about smart and sustainable integrated urban development and about the means to implement the Leipzig Charter on European sustainable cities.   // Reference framework on sustainable cities

But there is no global political project in the EU and this has major consequences on European cities (in terms of integration of urban issues at the European level).

The current crisis has also dramatic consequences for cities. They have to choose between the founding pillars of sustainability, they have to make major political choices, identify priorities. For instance, Europe is an ageing continent compared to emerging countries. This may explain why the difference between EU member states and emerging countries. The latter, backed by UN-Habitat, truing to build on sustainable communities through a dynamic approach while in the EU, the member states focus on reference frameworks, guidelines and rules. Emerging countries are in the movement, the EU is not.

This population problem is a major issue. In Europe, there is also the problem of migration to take into account and the problem of shrinking cities, especially in a context of decreasing fossil energy supply.

=> What are the tools to retain people in cities?

New concept: SMART – Sustainable, Manageable, Active, Relevant and Reflective, Targeted – city

=> A city able to build strong networks around the world, in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy.

P. Defranceschi (ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability Brussels Office) - http://www.iclei.org/

Presentation of ICLEI and of several examples of urban good practices in Freiburg, Havana, Caracas. ICLEI is also a supporting structure of the Covenant of Mayors (http://www.eumayors.eu/), gathering 1600 municipalities. The 1st energy action plan developed in the frame of the Covenant has been signed recently.

ICLEI has developed a definition of urban sustainability based on the decrease of the use of natural resources (to a level that does not endanger ecosystems) and on a high quality of life for everyone through the creation of political, economic and social systems. ICLEI focus particularly on climate, water, air and biodiversity issues.

ICLEI developed three cooperation programmes with China:
-   ECOPROFIT

- EU China Environmental Management Cooperation programme
- RELAY : Research for Local Action Towards Sustainability

Discussion

<u>Covenant of Mayors</u>: this is a very good initiative. It could be maybe binding, but the most important is that cities need help/support to implement it through other projects and supporting structures. This is not only a problem of financial resources and the EU is not sure to have the money in the next programming period. This is the same with the initiative Regions for economic change (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/sustainable-growth/index_en.cfm). Moreover, for that kind of initiative, the EU should stick to its original goals.

<u>Governance</u>: there is a growing demand within the EU concerning urban issues. For instance, in the current context of crisis, mayors are often alone facing the consequences of the crisis in terms of inequalities, poverty and security issues. This is especially the case for the mayors of small and medium towns who cannot compete with the mayors of the big metropolises.
- ⇨ How can the EU answer to this demand and help those mayors?

This is complex, especially at a time of increasing "decentralization" process and empowerment of local authorities in the EU member states.
- ⇨ Again, the key question is: **what is the best level to act?** Is the problem only local or also European?
- ⇨ We need a mix of top-down (regulation, rules) and bottom-up initiatives. The EU could motivate/support bottom-up approach
- ⇨ The EU could give cities rewards for their efforts

<u>Vocabulary:</u> there is no common definition of a "sustainable city" whereas we need a common glossary and common definitions. Agreement on the fact that this is a process => "sustainable enabling". Moreover, is there a way to measure sustainability? Is there a ready-made model? Since it is a problem, time is also an important question when talking about sustainable cities: How can we take into account obsolescence? Can we develop a flexible approach, with evolving indicators?

<u>Gender issues</u>: is there a particular place for women in sustainable development?

3rd session: Implementing sustainable cities on the ground – Some examples and ideas

JM Galley (Representative, National Association of towns and regions of Art and History and protected Areas)

The Association nationale villes et pays d'art et d'histoire – villes à secteurs sauvegardés et protégés is a network composed of 200 members with a strong focus on urban heritage and on town-centres in the urban-related policies. Indeed, old cities are often pockets of poverty. But there are also places where it is possible to solve problems like mobility and there are specific places to achieve equilibrium and to implement a transversal approach (in terms of housing, transport, facilities…). In other words, town centres can be considered as a laboratory for the new sustainable city

1st step of the work of the network: to gather all the private and public partners to get them to know each other. Then, they gather 3 or 4 days/week to work on various themes. This network is also an opportunity to gather experts and politicians around the same table, which is also interesting in terms of governance.

There are very different financial tools and means whereas the problems are the same. Here: BATAN initiative (national programme in cooperation with the city of Strasbourg).

"Du contre-pouvoir à la co-production: le conflit, source d'innovation? – La situation du Maelbeek, Bruxelles" – *B. Wert* (European Commission DG ENTR) & *Dominique Nalpas* (Collectif Eau WaterZone)

B. Wert – the EU innovation policy
For several years we can observe a new orientation in the EU innovation policy characterized by more autonomy and possibilities, especially since the launch of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 => Creation of the CIP – Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme – by the DG Enterprise and industries of the European Commission. The new initiative Europe 2020 has put forward the "innovation flag" through new targets and new concepts: before, the innovation focused on research activities, de - taxation, helping the supply side. Now, the innovation policy has developed a strong focus on the demand side (e.g.: local authorities) through instruments like procurements. This shift is also characterized by a more inclusive vision in terms of social innovation and by new concepts like design, innovation in public services, new business models, etc.

This new orientation can be used to develop a more sustainable local development but there are still some problems:
- timing
- long/middle term process and challenges

- Greening the public administration per se, in other words, does changing behaviours mean to spread innovation at the local level?
- Risk-aversion problem: is the administration ready to take risks?
- Tension between local actions and legal procedures => at the detriment of creativity?

D. Nalpas
Presentation of a way to foster citizen participation and to find a shared vision and a common solution after a conflict
⇨ Platform to exchange ideas, calls for ideas
⇨ New ways to create new politics
Are there any success factors?
- a local administration not afraid by the conflict
- a strong coalition of forces and links with experts
Close to the example of "community organisations" in the US

Concerning China: creative tension (in that case) vs. harmonious cities (in China)?

The energy challenge in sustainable cities – *G. Bastin* (Walloon Ministry for Energy)

In the Walloon region, we can observe a decrease in the energy consumption by industries but an increase in the energy consumption of the tertiary sector.

The government decided to focus on the housing sector, the current stock being quite old (only 50% of the roofs are insulated). The idea of the regional plan is to put the human being at the centre of the system (2 goals: to modify energy consumption patterns and to increase renewable energy supply).
Some key aspects of the 1st step of the plan:
- Access to energy for everyone
- Inform people about what energy really is/"becoming sensitive"
- Acting through various kinds of subsidies depending on the level of incomes
The core idea of the plan is also to implement the EU regulation in terms of energy.

2nd step: foster the use of renewable energies, especially through the use of green certificates. This should also allow the creation of new jobs.

P Gaborit (ENTP: European New Towns Platform)

Chinese urban development is fascinating: There are not less than 2 483 000 cars every day in the streets of Beijing[2] number of which is ever increasing, the construction of the Shanghai metro (started in the 90ies) has been really quick. The urban development is gigantic, booming and going further than what would have been imagined some years ago, when China was considered as an emerging country. The ENTP has signed a friendship agreement with the government of Shanghai last year, and has co organized a seminar/workshop about "sustainable development of small

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[2] Source confucius institute Brussels

and medium sized cities" in November 2009 gathering many local authorities, but we have been confronted to a question of scale. This enabled the participants however to identify some points.

- The first one is that there is a strong will of exchange of knowledge with European counterparts. The question of scale matters but European cities have the image of being "good places for living and sustainable towns".
- The second point is the gigantic need for urban development: China has currently 1.3 billion people (Togji university 2000 figures). The % of Chinese people living is cities was 36%. Since then the demand of urbanization is of 10 million every year. It is expected that the rate of urbanization will reach 6°% if 2020 with a global population of 1.4 to 1.5 billion (of course figures need to be considered carefully). Other indicators show that China is one of the few countries which will reach the Millenium Development Goals targets (especially the one related to the reduction of slums) and economic indicators are also interesting: in 1990 the GDP per capita was Dollars 500 (source Tonji university), in 2000 it was 800 dollars, and it is expected to the 3000 dollars in 2020.

This gives to Chinese cities numerous challenges but also assets:
- a strong economy and growth
- an increasing development of pioneering technologies
- a history of centralized planning
- More and more local initiatives to reduce environmental footprint . The idea of a "right to the city" is slowly progressing. Until now, Chinese citizens needed a visa to move from the countryside to the cities (failing which they cannot access basic services). But more and more officials now think that it is time to decouple urbanization and impact on the environment, but applying sustainable urban planning and developing more eco technologies

Discussion
The Chinese are really eager to learn more form the experience of European local authorities.

The relation between public and private spaces: it seems that there is a tendency in China to privatise public spaces and to transform them into private ones, especially in a context of discouragement of spontaneous public meetings, or in other words discouragement of public use of public spaces. But there is one major risk about privatisation of public spaces: municipalities could lose the control of their development in the years to come. This creates half public – half private spaces.
This raises the question of the scale of the city. What are the elements to create some social cohesion within a city? Are small cities more "human friendly" than bigger cities?

Ageing population issue: Nowadays, elderly people are often helped by their families. This generational solidarity may change in the years to come. How will the Chinese deal with this issue?

Key questions to be discussed with the Chinese partners:
- **Land-use problematic**: private/public use, density, sustainable management of urban green spaces and landscapes, urban – rural links
- **The new social mix within the sustainable city**: the social pillar is as important as the economic and environmental pillars, poverty issues, ageing populations
- **Governance**: which is the best decision level to implement sustainability? Why is the participatory approach so important for sustainability?
- **What is an harmonious cities**?
- **What are the challenges and priorities**?
- **How urban planning is conceived in order to integrate more sustainability**?